



ORAL HISTORY— CONRAD TAEUBER

This is an interview conducted on April 12, 1989 with former Associate Director for Demographic Fields, Conrad Taeuber [Mar. 1968-Jan. 1973]; previously, Assistant Director for Demographic Fields [Apr. 1951-Mar. 1968]. The interviewer was Robert Voight, retired chief of the Data User Services Division [Acting Chief, Aug. 1971-Jan. 1972; Chief, Jan. 1972-Dec. 1974].

Voight: We'd like to have your background on education, your areas of study, and where were you before you came to Census.

Taeuber: I graduated from the University of Minnesota where I have A.B., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees. That work was in sociology, more specifically in rural sociology. I spent a year then at the University of Wisconsin. From there I went to Mount Holyoke College, where my wife and I were teaching until the end of 1933. On January 1, 1943, I came to Washington in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Later I transferred to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. After a number of years, I was with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and, when they changed their headquarters from Washington to Rome, I stayed behind and went to the Bureau of the Census.

Voight: That was in what year, do you remember?

Taeuber: That would be 1951.

Voight: We, I was there a little bit ahead of you then. Now I know that you came to the Census and took the position of assistant director for, I guess they'd call it "demographics" now. Maybe it had another name then.

Taeuber: It did—"Demographic Fields."

Voight: Was Eckler [Director, Bureau of the Census, 1965-1969] director then? No.

Taeuber: No, Roy Peel [Roy V. Peel, Director of the Census, 1950-1953] was director.

Voight: Roy Peel was director, and then we had Burgess, [Robert W. Burgess, Director of the Census, 1953-1961, followed by Richard M. Scammon, 1961-1965] I guess, and then Ross Eckler. Now in the organization at that time, you were responsible for which divisions?

Taeuber: Population Division, Housing Division, Agriculture Division, and I believe there was one called Demographic Surveys.

Voight: Right. If you came in 1951 you were really in the middle of the 1950 census, right?

Taeuber: Right.

Voight: Did you have any commuting to Philadelphia, where we were processing the census?

Taeuber: Quite frequently.

Voight: You rode up with Dr. Roy V. Peel, maybe? At that time, who was [deputy] director then? Was Hauser [Philip M. Hauser, Deputy Director, Bureau of the Census, 1942-1947] still there?

Taeuber: Hauser was no longer there. Must have been Eckler.

Voight: Now I don't remember either who was assistant director. But in the divisions, Population was?

Taeuber: Howard Brunsman. [Howard J. Brunsman, Chief, Population Division, Bureau of the Census, 1948-1966]

Voight: Housing was?

Taeuber: Wayne Daugherty. [Wayne F. Daugherty, Assistant Chief for Housing Statistics, Population and Housing Division, Bureau of the Census, 1951, later Chief, Housing Division, 1956-1961]

Voight: And Agriculture was, of course, Hurley. [Ray Hurley, Agriculture Division, Bureau of the Census, 1946-1968]

Taeuber: Ray Hurley. [Ray Hurley, Chief, Agriculture Division, Bureau of the Census, 1946-1968]

Voight: Had you met Ray Hurley? And the duties and responsibilities that they [Census History Staff] ask about means that you were guiding and directing the activities of those several divisions, right? Do you recall the general conditions then; that is, how was our budget at the time? Inadequate as usual, or do you recall?

Taeuber: Of course the 1950 census had run somewhat higher than estimated. We were in a continuing problem of how much of the tabulation could be done. What could be sacrificed to stay within the budget?

Voight: And I presume we had to make some sacrifices?

Taeuber: Yes, what was known as Taberizing the Bureau. We do as he says because the budget was being cut primarily by Congressman Taber. [Representative John Taber, R., New York]

Voight: Do you recall if there was any legislation that had a direct effect on the census activities during the 1950s period? That is a long, long period I know.

Taeuber: That's a long period. Well, the attempt to shut down the economic censuses, I believe originated in the Department of Commerce.

Voight: That was Mr. Sinclair Weeks [Sinclair Weeks, Secretary of Commerce, 1953-1958]. His project was to eliminate them, wasn't it?

Taeuber: It was to eliminate them. And there was enough concern over that outside [the Bureau] that an organization known as the Federal Statistics Users Conference came into being and the economic censuses were restored.

Voight: I guess they were a powerful influence in getting them restored at the time, were they not?

Taeuber: They were.

Voight: During that period of rather strained situation in the economic censuses, I presume employee morale was not the best in the economic field, but, presumably, it didn't have much effect in the other divisions at the time.

Taeuber: No, we took staff reductions. We lost some very good staff people.

Voight: That's right, we did.

Taeuber: In order to keep in line with the budget restrictions.

Voight: And I remember there were reductions in grade at that time, too, for some people. They got hit very hard. Beulah Washabaugh was one I remember that went from maybe an [grade] 11 or 12 down to a [grade] 5 or 6. Ruth White was another one I remember that went down. When we came to the 1955 Census of Agriculture [1954 Census of Agriculture], we were pretty well restored by then, were we? Not that we had gained back all of the staff, but fund-wise it didn't have to much effect on the agriculture census.

Taeuber: That's right.

Voight: Well, did we have any major projects in that period that we attempted to get underway, do you recall?

Taeuber: The current population survey [CPS], of course, was a major activity, and the major activity was continually undergoing change.

Voight: Here is an interesting question, what about the decision-making process in those early years of the 1950s? Was it pretty much what we call "the executive staff," or was it equally effective among the separate divisions?

Taeuber: That varied a good deal with the director. Roy Peel had relatively little influence in the organization of the Bureau. Dick Scammon [Richard A. Scammon, Director, Bureau of the Census, 1961-1965] had more, and R. W. Burgess spent most of his time [and] energy on the "internals" of the Census Bureau.

Voight: I was missing when you had Dick Scammon as director. Was he sort of a "hands-off" director too, or did he get into the "nitty-gritty" very much?

Taeuber: He didn't get into the "nitty-gritty" very much, but he had a major influence on the congressional relations and the relations within the Government.\

Voight: He was probably very strong on congressional relations.

Taeuber: Very strong.

Voight: Can you recall any innovations in that period, in the 1950s, that we adopted or developed? When did we start down in the machine section developing the page turners and so on? Was that in the 1950s? Microfilming?

Taeuber: Yes, that was in the 1950s. At that time the Bureau had a machine shop, as you know. Tony Berlinsky, [Anthony A. Berlinsky, successively, Chief, Machine Development Section, Machine Tabulation Division; Chief, Engineering Development

Laboratory, Computer Services Division; and Chief, Engineering Division (1972-75), Bureau of the Census] who developed all kinds of modifications, actually developed the column sorter which became the mainstay of card operations at that time. But, looking at the period as a whole, the shift to the computers, part of the 1950 census as you know, was tabulated on the UNIVAC.

Voight: **Yeah, I think we did three or four States, if I recall, on the computer as a sort of dry run. And that must also have been the period in which we at least attempted putting it on microfilm and going through the processor for microfilm to tape, or was that then? That was maybe later.**

Taeuber: No, during that period there were extended conversations between the Bureau and the Bureau of Standards. The Bureau of Standards had a hand in building UNIVAC to begin with. But they agreed to undertake the process that eventually ended in FOSDIC [film optical sensing device for input to computer], which was a way of going from the original document to magnetic tape without the intervention of human beings.

Voight: **Right, well during that period, who would you say the key individuals were and how they influenced the outcome of the activities, besides yourself?**

Taeuber: Morris Hansen, [Morris H. Hansen, Associate Director, Statistical Standards and Methodology, Bureau of the Census, 1949-1968] obviously.

Voight: **Morris was the kingpin, wasn't he?**

Taeuber: Ross Eckler, Howard Grievies [Howard C. Grievies, Deputy Director, Bureau of the Census, 1965-1967] more in relations with the industrial community and with the Federal Statistics Users Conference and other Government agencies, Internal Revenue Service.

Voight: **Let's shift to the next decade. When did you leave the Bureau?**

Taeuber: 1973.

Voight: **So you went through the 1960 census, also. Can you recall the major problems in 1960?**

Taeuber: The budget was always a problem. We were under a good deal of pressure from quite a number of outside organizations for inclusion of questions in the questionnaire. The FOSDIC created operational problems, which by and large were solved, though sometimes [solving them] took longer than we expected. The use of sam-

pling in connection with the census was the subject of considerable controversy, and by that time also the matter of the identification of what we now call Hispanics became a real political issue. And, as you recall, the 1930 census had identified Mexicans as a separate race category. That did not go over well with the government of Mexico, and later the Census Bureau went to identifications of Spanish surnames as a way of identifying what we now call Hispanics.

Voight: **And as I recall we had a project in the Population Division where we were trying to reconstruct the White-Mexican problem back to 1930, I think, 1930 and 1940.**

Taeuber: With the continuing racist problem, and there was a problem primarily because the descendants of the people who were living in the area over in—1846 [1848], was it? When we took a large chunk of Mexico away from them? The descendants of those people are still to a large extent speaking Spanish, and still to a large extent in Spanish-speaking churches. Irrigation, agricultural—it hasn't really moved out—they preserve their culture. Identifying them as native born of native parentage didn't quite do it.

Voight: **I remember; didn't we go through—established [in] some way—a list of names that were presumably Spanish?**

Taeuber: There was a list of some 400 names.

Voight: **[We] tried to use that to help with identification. Can you think of any materials that the Bureau's historians might not have that might be helpful in that period? That's a hard question because I don't know what they have and you don't know very well what they have.**

Taeuber: They should have the documentation on this matter of Hispanics.

Voight: **I am going to check that with Fred Bohme [Frederick G. Bohme, Chief, Census History Staff, Data User Services Division, Bureau of the Census, 1975-1993.]**

Taeuber: There should be, not in the same degree of importance, a history of the matter of the Census of religious bodies which was taken in 1926 and in 1916, skipped in 1936.

Voight: **We got all ready, I think, in \$46, but then it fell through, if I recall.**

Taeuber: There was a report prepared on the whole matter of the census of religious bodies and the questions of religion in the census. I think it's in the library.

Voight: That is something they should check on. Was that prepared by Truesdell [Dr. Leon E. Truesdell, Chief Statistician for Population, Bureau of the Census, 1925-1948, and later Chief Demographer, Bureau of the Census, 1948-1955], do you recall?

Taeuber: No, that was prepared by another scientist, who was outside the Bureau.

Voight: Oh! through the \$46 period. Shifting from beyond the 1960 census, can you think of anything that had innovations, either on the technologies side of it or methodology?

Taeuber: There was a good deal of effort to find ways of improving the handling of the census. There was the concern of the undercount in the 1940 [and] 1950 post-enumeration surveys that showed part of the undercount. The undercount issue first became important when somebody found that there were more persons at ages 10-19 years, than there were 0-5 in the last preceding census. Immigration could not account for this discrepancy. There was an estimate of that, but in the 1950 census—following the 1950 census—there was a good deal of effort to trace out the under enumeration, particularly in relation to Whites and Blacks in metropolitan areas. Now that metropolitan areas and the recognition—part of the explanation of the missing of young children was that their parents were missing. There was a good deal of effort all through the 1950s and 1960s to develop ways of getting more complete enumeration of these people that had been missed. There was an effort to enlist the cooperation of the Urban League and the various ethnic-origin organizations.

Voight: And that certainly has been extended in the latest census, I guess.

Taeuber: It's been a major concern.

Voight: Did we have any methodological breakthroughs in that period, do you recall?

Taeuber: The CPS was redesigned. At some point it was put on a basis of complete mechanization. And it was probably sometime in the 1950s, rather in the 1960s, that an effort was made to avoid leaks of the, particularly of the unemployment figures, because for some years it was a great game when one cabinet officer or another member of [the Department of] Commerce tried to beat the others to make public the findings. That whole matter of announcing at the beginning of the year the day and hour when certain figures are going to be released, and then holding to it was an important breakthrough.

Voight: And I guess it is pretty solid now.

Taeuber: It's solid.

Voight: Can you think of any individuals that appeared on the scene in the 1960's that were key to the success to the censuses?

Taeuber: What are the years for Bob Burgess [as director; they were 1953-1961]?

Voight: I can recall, not that it had to do with key individuals, but I remember that we had quite a shortage of young people coming in the \$1960s, and you worked and worked and worked to try and influence some of those to come in.

Taeuber: I think Joe Daley [Joseph F. Daley, Associate Director, Statistical Standards and Methodology, Bureau of the Census, 1968-1971] probably was one of the acquisitions.

Voight: Yeah, he came in on the scene then, didn't he? And he was very effective. Do you recall any noteworthy developments outside of your purview at the [Census Bureau], that, over in the economic side?

Taeuber: The attempt to get uniform classification for economic activities at the Bureau, at what's now called the Bureau of Economic Analysis, that was under the auspice of economics. [For the] Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue [Service], and [Department of] Labor to finally get one set of industrial classifications was a very important development, and eventually was almost completely successful. The continuing improvement of sampling procedures. The whole effort to arrive at the error, not only the sampling errors but [the] nonsampling errors, and to take steps to prevent them, may be important. And then the almost step-by-step movement to more and more use of computers and computer technology.

Voight: What about the population estimates area in that period? Was that the period when we tried to enlist the efforts of the States to work up their estimates, or was that later?

Taeuber: That was a continuing effort which found very little support out in the States. Very little capability in the States. You couldn't do anything about it. I remember, one State population estimator who was very—apologetic isn't quite the word—he felt powerless. In that State, the number of liquor stores in a community was dependent on the population. The Governor's Office was continually beset with pleas from local mayors, and this man, who was supposed to provide the population estimates, just had no, he said he had no support. He simply had to go along and give in to

any politically important plea. A good contrast to California [where] they had a procedure for taking special censuses.

Voight: **That is another area that came into very strong activity in the 1960s, wasn't it, the estimates that occurred, [the] areas requested?**

Taeuber: One other thing, I think it was in 1947 [March 1948, Series P-25, No. 8, Forecasters of the Population], the Bureau of the Census issued a forecast of the population in the United States, and that was not done again until just recently.

Voight: **Is that right? I didn't realize that.**

Taeuber: I think the last interim census estimates, in effect, assumed there was one figure rather than to produce a range of figures, and made a forecast instead of a projection.

Voight: **Can you think of external events that had a decided impact on the census during the 1960s?**

Taeuber: The most dramatic case was, again, the matter of Hispanics. The 1970 schedule was ethnically oriented when the order came down that we were to ask a direct question, have the people identify themselves as Hispanics. We argued that we had native-born of foreign parentage; that gives use Mexicans of first and second generation, gives us some Puerto Ricans of first and second generation, but we couldn't get away from the people in New Mexico, Arizona, and South Texas. There were to be three (schedules): There was a 100-percent schedule, 20-percent schedule and a 5-percent schedule. The 5-percent schedule had barely started at the printers when we pulled it back and threw in the question which hadn't been tested in the field—under orders.

In the 1960s, I think there was a real improvement in the effort to reach the public with information and getting some feedback, not only from the advisory committees, but from the press generally. Art Struve [A.W. Struve, Public Information Officer, Bureau of the Census, 1956-1963], who was information officer for many years, never really went beyond the true story. Frank Wilson [Frank R. Wilson, Information Assistant to the Director, Bureau of the Census, 1939-1956], was really the prime mover on finding the true story and putting that out, regardless of whether it had much effect on the quality and quantity of data. But somewhere, somewhere in there, I'm sure you went along with this, but it was pushed much further later, of making sure that the important things, the important results were made known and that there was a variety of efforts to reach

different elements of the public. The Census Monograph Program is a completely different way of making facts hang together, and there were special efforts. We, the staff members, spent a good deal more time in the field, meeting with various organizations to get them more acquainted with what there was and with reasons for collecting the information.

Voight: I can recall, I can't remember his name completely, although he's a columnist now on the Phoenix newspaper. But a young man came in who was quite a fireball in the public relations area, and he did a good job of getting the census better known and certainly the important results got better publicity, which was I think, in the early—well it started with the preparatory period for the 1970 census. I can't remember his name. You left the Bureau in when?

Taeuber: 1973.

Voight: So you did go through the major portion of the 1970 census? What were the major problems in the 1970s, do you recall?

Taeuber: The normal problems of finding the very large number of people who took part in the census, that [was rather difficult]. The continuing dialogue with people outside concerning conflict, the needs for specific items, we spent a great deal of time both in the field and in Washington in trying to sort out the questions that people wanted to have added. We had limits; we had mechanical limits; we had limits on the amount of time we could expect from the citizens. The whole question of going over to a mailout/mailback procedure and how you build up the controls in that.

Voight: Did we—we tested that in 1960, didn't we, to some extent?

Taeuber: Yes.

Voight: But 1970, we were how far?

Taeuber: A great deal more effort went into recording the 1970 census, in lining up—lining up isn't the right word for it—[in] getting actions by the activist groups. The Urban League was one organization in this group that was antagonistic. The whole flock of Hispanic organizations—can't remember the names. . . It wasn't just one Hispanic organization, there was a number of them, and they were pushing different things. It's really something as simple as the name by which these people were to be known: there were Mexicans, there were, what else?

Voight: I don't recall—Hispanics, and what?

Taeuber: Well, we had somewhat the same problem with the Black population, where you had groups that wanted to be known as "Blacks" and other groups that wanted to be

known as “Afro-Americans.” It’s the debate that’s going on right now and the Bureau’s old use of the word “Negro.” In fact, there was a Congressman who introduced a bill which would require us to identify Black people as Afro-Americans. There were a group of Mexicans, I say Mexican, because within the Hispanic population there were some words that could be used for one part of the group but not for another part of the group. The word “Mexican” itself, applied to people enumerated in the United States, was acceptable in some parts of the Southwest, but not in other parts.

Voight: **Did we actually have provision on the schedule for those differences, do you remember?**

Taeuber: No. We provided a Spanish-language questionnaire upon request, but we had no way of varying the names that were being used in different parts of the country.

Voight: **In 1970, budgetwise, did we have the same old problems, or were we in slightly better shape then?**

Taeuber: I would say we had the same problems in the early years of the Nixon Administration.

Voight: **Yeah, I remember we had to curtail—what was it?—“place of work” data from the processing in [Data Preparation Division, Jeffersonville, Indiana]. That was one of the things that suffered.**

Taeuber: We went through the operation with the 1950 census, cutting back the tabulation based on the sample and cutting back the size of the sample.

Voight: **Do you recall how much of the 1970 census was done by mail? Were we as high as 40 percent then?**

Taeuber: Well over that; I’d say approximately 80 percent [it was 60 percent].

Voight: **Oh! That’s a pretty good proportion. As I recall we had—some of the publications got delayed, unbearably so, didn’t it, after \$70?**

Taeuber: That’s normal.

Voight: **That is nothing new. But I seem to remember that particularly. Can you think of any bright new names that looked like people who would enhance the Census Bureau, that came in the \$70 period? I can think of some that sort of came up the ranks pretty rapidly, such as Barbara Bailar [Barbara A. Bailar, later Associate Director for Statistical Standards and Methodology, Bureau of the Census, 1979-1989], but I think she’d been there for a while.**

Taeuber: Barbara had been there for a while, but you’re quite right.

Voight: I was trying to think of others that came in then that now—

Taeuber: That was when Waksberg [Joseph Waksberg, Associate Director, Statistical Standards and Methodology, Bureau of the Census, 1972-1973] came around, [he] was certainly moved up quite rapidly.

Voight: In fact, I think there was a young man that came in then, that is now handling decennial—Pete Bounpane [Peter A. Bounpane, later Assistant Director for Decennial Censuses, Bureau of the Census, 1981-], remember that name? He came in the 1970s, earlier than 1970.

Taeuber: I was wondering how long Charlie Jones [Charles D. Jones, Associate Director for Decennial Censuses, Bureau of the Census, 1987-] has been around. Do you know? [1962]

Voight: Have you got a handy description of the effect of the Nixon Administration on the census?

Taeuber: It was some time during the Nixon administration, that the real effort was made to bestow political controls. Word came down that the Bureau was to employ Mr. X, Mr. Y, Mr. Z; and Mr. X was to sit—given an office next to the Chief of the Population Division—and he would review all [figures] issued by the Population Division. SESA—Social, Economic, Statistics Administration, which combined the BEA [Bureau of Economic Analysis] with the Census [Bureau], responding to one central point, which really never got off the ground, but there was an effort. There was another person, whom the Bureau was required to put on its staff, who went to Geography Division and apparently did good work for them.

Voight: That was the advent of Mr. [Joseph] Wright [Joseph R. Wright, Deputy Director, Bureau of the Census, 1971-1972, Acting Director, Jan.-Mar. 1973], wasn't it?

Taeuber: Mr. Wright, right.

Voight: Thankfully, SESA was fairly short lived, I guess. Its impact didn't last very long, although it was a problem at the time. Back to technology and methodology—did we have anything we brought into play in 1970 that was sort of on the frontier? Of course, I'd say our publicity efforts were something new at that time.

Taeuber: That was relatively new. There were, of course, continuing modifications to the machines and the procedures for using those machines. Somewhere in there, there was a rationalization for the CPS and the responsibility for the employment and un-

employment figures, for their release, was given to the Department of Labor, which is still the greatest survey operation in the Bureau today. But then there was an attempt to set up a regular procedure so CPS could carry other subjects, and the procedure was more or less rigidly [observed]. Every year we got some figures on income in connection with the March CPS. Internal migration was put on a different time table, but questions on internal mobility [were] regularly inserted. Questions on family structure, family relationships were introduced again on a regular basis. What else? Then there was the annual housing survey.

Voight: **The annual housing survey started when, do you remember? The mid-1960s?**

Taeuber: I'd say the late 1960s [1973].

Voight: **Now as I recall, we got to the point where you had to speak for a spot on the CPS questionnaire a long time ahead, in terms of getting something for [anyone] outside of those regular customers. I guess in technology we shifted to the faster computers of course, in that period. Did you—did Barabba [Vincent P. Barabba, Director, Bureau of the Census, 1973-1976, and 1979-1981] come in for 1970? Was he the director at the time?**

Taeuber: No, George Brown [George Brown, Bureau of the Census, 1969-1973].

Voight: **George Brown; right, then after Brown came Barabba. I think Brown left also in 1973, or thereabouts.**

Taeuber: I think in 1973 or 1974, Brown was forced out when Nixon entered his second term. He required resignations of all the people who served at the pleasure of the President, and Brown's was one resignation that was accepted.

Voight: **Do you remember Lance Alworth, the political analyst?**

Taeuber: That's Tarrance [Vernon Lance Tarrance, Special Assistant to the Director, Bureau of the Census, 1969-1973].

Voight: **I was thinking of the football player! Now that was something we hadn't really enjoyed prior to that time as such, was it?**

Taeuber: No.

Voight: And he came in a Nixon man I guess? But in effect independent from the information office, too, I think. He didn't have control of that, or did he?

Taeuber: He tried. There was a serious effort from the Department [of Commerce], and I suppose from the White House, [to place] the more politically sensitive people in positions where they could influence the flow of data.

Voight: I think Paul Squires [Paul R. Squires, Chief, Field Division, Bureau of the Census, 1970-1971] came in under that aegis, but he sort of graduated to a regular census person.

Taeuber: I think Paul graduated to it. Paul was somewhere in the congressional scene when he came over.

Voight: Yeah, but I remember he handled a lot of the political go-between when he first started and then gradually shifted into the regular activities.

Taeuber: In the 1950 census, the "Bull Elephants," is that whey they were called? They were Republican congressional staff, Paul kept his contacts with them alive.

Voight: How old, let's see, how long did you work with Eckler? Do you remember, were you assistant director at the time Eckler moved in?

Taeuber: I came in as assistant director when Ross was deputy.

Voight: Somewhere in the Johnson administration, wasn't it?

Taeuber: Scanlon left [in 1965] and Ross became director. Somewhere in there I was in the comparable position to be moved to associate director from assistant director. And with Ross it was much more of an executive staff, functioning as an executive staff, than it had been with Brown or Burgess.

Voight: Yeah, I guess all the way back probably, almost?

Taeuber: Eckler was the first person who had risen through the ranks since the early 1930s.

Voight: That's right. What would you say were some of the shortcomings that the Census [Bureau] was never able to overcome?

Taeuber: Well, the understanding by the public of the role of an organization like the Census [Bureau], [that produces] Federal statistics, is still far from [perfect]. The relations between the Bureau and data users had had a good deal of attention in recent years, getting a good deal of attention now in relation to 1990. But I don't think we've gotten nearly as far with that as we should have. How you deal with the interest

groups outside is how you get their support without putting on the questions they want. And the question is whether we're really doing a good job of collecting statistics in the right way by having a big push once every 10 years and then having to live with those figures for the next 10 years. The failure—a mid-decade census that we were authorized to conduct—but it has never been taken.

Voight: **That was probably one of the biggest, I would say, disappointments, wasn't it, in our time with the Bureau?**

Taeuber: To fairly get a role, and then have the Secretary of Commerce literally put it down; [the mid-decade census] didn't make it with the Department staff. The Bureau, so far as the Department of Commerce is concerned, is really an almost as unwelcome body. Recently, the Secretary of Commerce [C. William Verity, Secretary of Commerce, 1987-1989] who came in with Reagan, who left recently, never visited the Bureau of the Census.

Voight: **Is that true?**

Taeuber: Which makes it difficult for the director to work with the Department, although with people like Bill Shaw [William H. Shaw, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, 1966-1968] in as an assistant to him—I think Bill was assistant to an under secretary. People like Bill Shaw, and Joe Duncan [Joseph W. Duncan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy, Department of Commerce, 1968-1969; later, Director Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards, Department of Commerce] had that position for a time. This helped, but with people like Sidney Weeks, who came in knowing full well “that the Government is beating the public to death by asking so many questions, when they could get the answer from the World Almanac or something.” This is something that needs work continually and needs work up on the Hill [i.e., in Congress].

Voight: **I guess in terms of the political aspect of cabinet appointees, it probably will always be a problem?**

Taeuber: Yes, it will always be a problem, whether it would be better to have an independent Department of Statistics, or office. Certainly not the Office of Statistical Studies as it has been handled for the last few years.

Voight: **No.**

Taeuber: Whether something like the Bonnen [Dr. James T. Bonnen, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University; project director, Federal Statistical System Project. For the recommendations made, see James T. Bonnen, “Improving the

Federal Statistical System: Report of the President's Reorganization Project for the Federal Statistical System," in Statistical Reporter, May 1980, No. 80-8, pp 197-212] recommendations could have made for much more effective operations, I guess is pushing it just a tad. The Bonnen recommendations didn't go anywhere.

Voight: **There was a good bit of discussion about establishing, for want of a better word, a Department of Government Statistics, pulling together the statistical agencies?**

Taeuber: There is no place in the congressional procedures; there is no place where the statistical programs come together. They're handled by different appropriation groups.

Voight: **They're chopped up between the departments and, therefore, budgets [are] chopped up. Did we [pause] have an investigation—I don't know whether that is the right word—but having to do with the problem of counting everybody in the fact that now most recently they want the Bureau to "guesstimate" the misses. Did we have that come up in your period of the Bureau? Did we make any attempts or did we turn it away?**

Taeuber: There was a research problem that got a great deal of attention. But there was probably more in the 1980s than before. A real push came from outside [the agency] that the numbers should be adjusted. But as far as the Bureau was concerned, it was a research problem. What groups were most pressing in this, and were they any techniques by which they could be reached? Special efforts to set up assistance centers in major public housing projects, to set up volunteer groups in the local communities to personally [get the people out] and be counted. But most of that was on a very limited scale, and a good deal of that depended on volunteer organizations. Nowadays, the way I understand it, there is more effort being made in connection with the 1990 census to get these formal or informal groups reaching their own members. The people that they can reach, urging them to come forward, not to hide from the census when the census form comes around.

Voight: **We are going to have a new group, the drug runners, that we won't be able to get this next round, I'm afraid.**

Taeuber: Not as drug runners, certainly.

Voight: What about the relationship between the Bureau of Census and the Department of Agriculture? Was that a bit stiff occasionally or was there a fairly easy relationship?

Taeuber: I wouldn't call it an easy relationship. We had very firm ideas, what was right and what was wrong, what was needed and what was not needed. But recognizing that, I'd say the relation with the Department of Agriculture was moderately good.

Voight: Did they have a substantial impact on the census of agriculture per se?

Taeuber: A very successful impact on the census of agriculture. We did have an Agriculture Advisory Committee—but the major push for inclusion or exclusion of items in the census came from the Department of Agriculture.

Voight: And presumably in the terms of what was tabulated and published, I guess?

Taeuber: No, there was one sticky point there. The Bureau of the Census had an executive order which allowed the Bureau to go to the Internal Revenue Service [IRS] and take down names and addresses of people meeting certain qualifications in the IRS forms. This became a mailing list for use in the census [or] for surveys. The Department of Agriculture was never able to get that kind of an executive order and their efforts to walk in by the back door, using data lists that Census had gotten, were stopped. This didn't make for the best relationship between the two entities. Because we, the Bureau, did go to the Department of Agriculture and ask for whatever lists of names of farmers they had in a number of areas. The country agents, State extension services, had very good lists, at least of the people they dealt with. They could give them to us. We could not, in turn, say we have identified so many more agricultural operations than you have.

Voight: It became a little sticky, huh?

Taeuber: It became a little sticky. All we could do was say you worked at the White House, [go get an order yourself] and they never could.

Voight: What about our relations with the Office of Economic Analysis [OEA]? Were they pretty goo, do you recall?

Taeuber: Well, I think I'd say that they were tolerable. We were doing [work we got] from the OEA. I continually harped on the fact that at that time the OEA was not using the best possible methods and the adjustments—the revisions—were probably more that they should have been.

Voight: I presume they had some impact on the income data that the Bureau collected, in terms of [literally] what was collected or not?

Taeuber: Yes, they did but they probably had less than you are thinking of. . . [end of tape, not recorded]

Voight: Do you recall any notable success that the Bureau achieved in the period when you were there?

Taeuber: I would say the modernization of the census, both in the field procedures, in the questionnaires, and in processing. The cooperation of some of the public groups. The Urban League, I think, had under consideration at one time boycotting the census and making their own computations. The business about a boycott of the census in the tradition of 1970 turned out to be much more wind than anything else. I recall one report from the field that a man who had been out, [and wrote,] urging people they shouldn't answer the questions. He didn't return his questionnaire. The field enumerator went to his place, found his wife, and she said [she] didn't agree with her husband. There were some other people who made a good deal of noise, who actually had very little effect on the cooperation from the public. The cooperation from the public as a whole was 80- to 85-percent return of the questionnaires by mail. It was a major breakthrough.

Voight: What about the relationships with the Statistical Policy Office of OMB? Did we have any major troubles with them, or were they good, bad, or different?

Taeuber: Well, since that office has virtually disappeared, I think the feeling on the part of the Bureau staff was that, wasn't it nice when there was such an office when we needed [it] in order to avoid undue duplication of work, or [to] undo improper gaps in the statistical system. These relationships varied a good deal with the director of the office and OMB. Varies also with the particular subject matter, which responsibilities they have. Working with Margaret Martin [Margaret E. Martin, Bureau of the Budget ; later Office of Management and Budget] was quite easy compared with working with Larry Bloomberg [Lawrence N. Bloomberg, Office of Statistical Policy, Office of Management and Budget]. But over all, I think its fair to say that the Bureau staff now would feel it had a much sounder organization of the Federal statistical system when there was a strong office in OMB.

Voight: What about the advisory committees and the professional associations? Were they helpful or did they interfere too much with the Bureau's objectives?

Taeuber: I'd say one of the shortcomings was that we never used these advisory committees to the extent they could have been used. To begin with, the composition of the committees varied a good deal. We identified people who had some standing in the field. In the agriculture advisory committee we dealt entirely with representatives from farm organizations; that is, the farm equipment dealers, the grain, the livestock organizations, the Farm Bureau, the Farmer's Union, the Grange, these organizations sent representatives. In the housing advisory committee we had that situation too, that we were dealing here with representatives of organizations in the population. In the housing advisory committee we were getting, in the main, people who had some standing in the field. Now there was a good deal of pressure in the early 1970s which would make these committees much more politically responsible.

I recall one session in which this was kicked around, and somebody from the Secretary's office said, in effect, "anybody would like to get a trip to Washington." They could identify with people for whom [a] trip to Washington would be a reward. In the late 1970s there was a good deal of effort to rationalize the use of noblesse oblige. One of the things that Jack Keane [Dr. John G. Keane, Director, Bureau of the Census, 1985-1989] worked on particularly was to reduce the amount of staff time that was required to meet with Committee A, or Committee B, or Committee C, which took a good deal of staff time. I'm under the impression that the people concerned feel that the reshuffling of that has been useful. I don't believe that, while I was there, we ever made full use of the various committees. The meetings with the advisory committees became so much "show and tell" operations, because there was very little time for anything else. Now, there was a part of that operation where corollary conversations went on with particular people. Some years before he became Director of the Bureau, Jack Keane served on an advisory committee as the representative of the American Marketing Association. While in Washington, he spent much of his time conferring with the staff members of the Population Division, who were responsible for work on fertility and population projections. There were, over the years, a number of other people who—not only did they get a good deal out of this, but they contributed a good deal [during] formal committee meetings [and

in] the more informal conversations that could be carried on then, and continued by correspondence or over the telephone.

Voight: **Once they got started, yeah. Would you say that the Bureau's relationship with the Secretary of Commerce, as a whole, was good, poor, or indifferent, maybe is the word?**

Taeuber: It was pretty much a balance, good and bad.

Voight: **We've had them both, haven't we?**

Taeuber: We've had them both.

Voight: **What about the Bureau's image of itself? Do you think we were too ingrown or was the balance about right, between the intramural interests and outside interests and responsibilities?**

Taeuber: That varies a good deal with the people and with the various subject matters with which you're dealing. The Bureau as a whole knows that it's very good. It's a world leader in statistical methods; it has provided a great deal of training to Third World countries, and [has] made contributions to work in the developed countries.

Voight: **The reputation there in that area is probably very good, isn't it? At least it has been up to this point. Would you say, on balance, that the Bureau succeeded in keeping politics out of its work? Or do you think we were affected to any degree by the political impositions that may have been made?**

Taeuber: I think I summed up that situation: In the early 1950s there was, of course, the budget cutting in the Congress. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was the SESA activity, and there were a number of steps taken to influence the Bureau's work on income statistics. The drive for the 1960s census events led to Congressman Betts [Representative Jackson E. Betts (R., Ohio)] of Ohio, and later Congressman Haley [Representative James A. Haley, (D., Florida) of Florida—who spent a great deal of time in cutting back the Bureau's activities, which they viewed as part of the intrusion on the ordinary citizen's privacy, but that varied somewhat, too.

Voight: **Can you think of strong friends we've had in the political side of the equation?**

Taeuber: Somebody that comes to mind as a very strong supporter, not that he knew a thing about the value of statistics, but he'd become involved in early appropriation for UNIVAC. Directors of the Bureau who testified before [Congressman] John Rooney [Representative John James Rooney (D., New York)] never failed to show

their recognition of that support, and it worked. John Rooney really took a paternal interest in some aspects of the Bureau, and supported the Bureau. [There were supporters] at the Federal Statistics Users Conference, and there was an organization of businessmen who worked closely with the statistical standards people at OMB. These were, on the whole, groups that were very much concerned with getting the Bureau the resources to deliver [needed data]. John Rooney backed them on appropriations, but I believe it was John Rooney who said, “The single people have no leg to stand on when they’re being sued [about statistics].” Somewhere I have seen this statement, the statement that Rooney made when that issue was concluded, that single people have no leg to stand on.

Voight: **Would you say that [the Federal Statistics Users Conference] was a substantial aid to the Bureau in its programs?**

Taeuber: In its early years, yes, but with the crisis in the “product’s” life surmounted, its support fell off with people outside brought in. We yelled “fire”—they came rushing to put out the fire, and then they disappeared before you picked up all the embers.

Voight: **Over time did it become a sort of advocacy group, more than one that was helpful in terms of advice or suggestions?**

Taeuber: They were organized, more or less, as an advocacy group—business people. There were academic people. There were similar categories of business. It was organized to represent specific interests outside the Bureau, and when, as I said, the crisis was over they walked away.

Voight: **They walked away?**

Taeuber: Yes, it came down to what was a fairly small organization with very limited [inaudible]

Voight: **Do you have any other words of wisdom to provide to the historians about your tenure?**

Taeuber: The book [The Revolution in United States Government Statistics] deals with the use of sampling for data, as well as [with] processing. [The book referred to is Joseph W. Duncan and William C. Shelton. The Revolution in United States Government Statistics: 1926-1976 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978)]

Voight: Suppose that wasn't a Ben Wattenberg [Benjamin J. Wattenberg, sociologist and writer. Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, 1977-] production was it?

Taeuber: No, that was somebody who was at the Department of Labor. I should have it on the shelf back here, but I'm not sure where. Ben Wattenberg never misses the opportunity to tape record an interview whenever we meet.

Voight: Well, maybe you can think of it later and let Fred Bohme know, because I'm sure he would be interested. Whether he is familiar with it or not, I'm not sure.

Taeuber: He should be. A book that has been published quite recently, by a Margo Anderson [Margo J. Anderson, Professor of History and Urban Affairs, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. The book is The American Census: A Social History (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).] on the American Census. It relates the political setting, from the view of political scientists, from the viewpoint of government needs and government actions, and I think it does a very good job of portraying what the Bureau can do and what it hasn't done.

Voight: And her name is what?

Taeuber: Margo Anderson, her maiden name was Conk, but more recently she. . .

Voight: I'm sure they'll check that one out, too.

Taeuber: I don't have the book on hand at the moment. I loaned it to Ross.

Voight: Well, I think that probably covers it.